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This Week's Homework

- Please share Commissioner Chmelik's op-ed with your local paper. It is a simple process of contacting the opinion section of your paper and submitting it for publication.

- Once you get it published, please [share](#) a link with us!

Dear Scott,

Recently, Commissioner Chmelik from Idaho County ID had a very articulate op-ed published in the ID County Free Press. We'd like to share that with you today.

Jim Chmelik Idaho County Commissioner
Tuesday, January 7, 2014

"The recent op/ed [Dec. 25 issue] by State Democrat party chairman Larry Kenck represents the contrast by those who think a centralized bureaucracy 3,000 miles away can best manage our state affairs, and those who believe it is time to take control of our own destiny as a state.

"It is time to restore some sanity to radical environmental policies, which are not preserving our water and air quality, or our Christmas trees, but in reality is destroying them; also being destroyed is prime endangered species habitat and millions of animals killed in what are now being classified as mega-wildfires. The one thing Mr. Kenck is right about is we do value clean air, clean water and room for elk to roam; however, the current policies are having the exact opposite effect. What state is he living in and does he really believe what he says?

"There is a lack of leadership in articulating solutions to the challenges we are facing. Today Americans are \$17 trillion in debt and another \$125 trillion in unfunded liabilities in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. These mounting liabilities are being passed on to future generations, and Mr. Kenck is worried about where he is going hunt for his Christmas tree.

"Today as Idahoans and Americans we need to face these

challenges head on and seek solutions to preserve and protect our environment while at the same time utilizing it to create a better life for us now and for those in the future.

"We do not accept the premise that you cannot do something nor that we cannot afford it. And in the case of transferring public lands we cannot afford not to. When 246,000 acres burned in Idaho County, the economic losses were real. 1.23 billion board feet of timber burned with a marketable value of \$369 million. 12.8 million tons of toxic gases released into the atmosphere and more than 750,000 animals were needlessly killed. Lost to our region and surrounding counties was more than a billion dollars in economic activity that would have provided paychecks, not unemployment checks. And every year the federal government locks us out of more and more access for recreation.

"We are asking to be treated the same as our eastern states. Check the historical records and you will find in the mid-1800s, the states of Indiana, Illinois, Florida, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi and Missouri were as much as 90 percent federally owned. Why the difference? From time to time, we need to refresh the future with a review of the past.

"To ensure the federal government does not sell these lands is the very reason we need state ownership. Federal debt and unfunded liabilities are out of control. This cannot be sustained. And what are the assets backing up these mountains of debt? Just in recoverable oil, natural gas, and coal, we have an estimated \$151 trillion in the West.

"Mr. Kenck would have you believe we cannot do this? The price tag is too high. He obviously does not believe in the creative genius of our men and women nor understand our abilities to respond to the call of a challenge. Americans have always responded to the call of a challenge.

"In 1961 President Kennedy recognized the threat of the Soviet Union and the importance of advancing our space technology. He challenged America to put a man on the moon within the decade and eight years later we did just that. Along the way there were challenges; however, we were not deterred, we did not give up. When Americans are challenged they answer the call.

"Today Idahoans are at a crossroads. Do we choose self-determination or government dependency? We are faced with new challenges and opportunities. It will be up to us to accept these challenges and insure the future viability of our way of life.

"How we accept these challenges will determine the limits of our freedoms or the boundless expansion liberty affords us when we are challenged to succeed through our personal motivations utilizing our creative genius, which is divinely inspired in all of us.

"I, for one, believe in the can-do attitude of our fellow Idahoans and Mr. Kenck apparently does not. If you value our heritage and traditions and our unique quality of life, then it is time to believe we can manage our own public lands and preserve it for future generations of Idahoans to enjoy and prosper from."

P.S. We still need you! Click [here](#) and stand with the American Lands Council as we move this work forward.



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